

Message Text

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SUBJECT: MAY 14 ELECTIONS IN THE SOUTH
REF: NAPLES 876

SUMMARY - THE MAY 14 ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS WERE MARKED BY IMPRESSIVE DC GAINS IN THIS CONSULAR DISTRICT. LEFTIST DAILY NEWS-PAPER "LA REPUBBLICA" CALLED THE ELECTIONS A "DC 'FESTA' IN THE SOUTH". THE PCI ON THE OTHER HAND SUFFERED POLITICALLY, DROPPING SHARPLY FROM THE 1976 POLITICAL ELECTIONS AND EVEN SLIGHTLY FROM THE 1972 LOCAL ELECTIONS. ITS MOMENTUM IN THE CONSULAR DISTRICT GENERATED BY THE GAINS IN THE LAST REGIONAL AND POLITICAL ELECTIONS, HAS

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BEEN LOST. FURTHERMORE, THE PCI MAY LOSE CONTROL OF SEVERAL OF THE LARGER CITIES. VOTES IN FAVOR OF THE THIRD PARTY IN THE SOUTH, THE FAR-RIGHT MSI/DN FELL OFF PRECIPITOUSLY. THE SOCIALIST AND LAY PARTIES (EXCEPT LIBERALS) DID VERY WELL IN COMPARISON WITH 1976 AND THEY RETURNED TO HEALTHY LEVELS REGISTERED IN 1972 LOCAL ELECTIONS.
END SUMMARY.

1. THERE ARE MANY FACTORS WHICH COULD HAVE INFLUENCED VOTER'S ATTITUDES.
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TITUDES. DC LEADERS IN CAMPANIA REGION ATTRIBUTE GAINS TO PARTY RENEWAL AND NEW CANDIDATES, BUT CLEARLY THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR WAS THE MORO KIDNAPPING AND ASSASSINATION WHICH OVERRODE LOCAL ISSUES THAT AFFAIR PERHAPS HAD AN EVEN GREATER IMPACT IN THE SOUTH, AND IN PUGLIA SPECIFICALLY, THAN THE REST OF ITALY. CHURCH ATTENDANCE SEEMED TO RISE. PRIESTS, EXTOLLING MORO'S CHRISTIAN VIRTUES AND CONDEMNING TERRORISM IN THEIR MAY 14 SERMONS CERTAINLY ALSO INFLUENCED

SOME VOTERS.

2. THE SOLID DC INCREASE SEEMED TO RECONFIRM SOUTHERN ITALIAN CONSERVATISM, CALLED INTO QUESTION BY ELECTIONS OF 1975 AND 1976. AT THE SAME TIME THE VOTE INDICATES THAT THE DC WOULD PAY NO POLITICAL PRICE IN THE SOUTH FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE PCI IN THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. (THE PCI, HOWEVER, CLAIMED IT PAID SUCH A

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PRICE). THE LIBERALS WHO REFUSED TO JOIN THE MAJORITY WERE ERODED FURTHER AND THE FAR-RIGHT MSI PROFITED NOT AT ALL. POLITICIANS IN THE SOUTH FEARED SOME VOTER RADICALIZATION IN FAVOR OF THE MSI, BUT IT DID NOT MATERIALIZE. THE MSI TOOK A BEATING.

3. PCI DIFFICULTIES IN THESE ELECTIONS MAY BE ATTRIBUTED NOT ONLY TO THE DOMINANT CONSIDERATION (MORO) BUT ALSO TO FACT THAT PCI GIUNTAS IN SEVERAL CITIES SIMPLY WORKED NO BETTER THAN THEIR PREDECESSORS AND WERE PLAGUED BY THE SAME KIND OF SCANDALS. NAPLES PROVINCIAL PCI SECRETARY DONISE DID NOT REFER TO PCI LOSSES BUT NOTED THAT "THE DC ADVANCE WAS BASED ON THE POLITICS OF NATIONAL UNITY WHICH AGAIN CONFIRMED THE VALIDITY OF OUR THESIS". HE ALSO STATED THAT THE PCI IMPROVED OVER LAST ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS (NOT, HOWEVER, ON HIS OWN TURF).

4. LOOKING AT OVER-ALL PERCENTAGE FOR CAMPANIA THE DC VOTE IMPROVED BY 6 PERCENT (43.9 PERCENT OF TOTAL) OVER 1972 ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS AND THE SAME FOR THE POLITICAL ELECTIONS. MEANWHILE THE PCI LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VOTE AT 17.4 PERCENT REMAINED UNCHANGED IN COMPARISON TO 1972 BUT DROPPED ALMOST 15 PERCENT FROM THE JUNE 1976 ELECTIONS. IN PUGLIA THE DC IMPROVED BY 6 PERCENT OVER LAST ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS AND MORE THAN 2 PERCENT OVER POLITICAL ELECTIONS, POLLING ALMOST 46

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PERCENT OF THE VOTE. THE PCI ON THE OTHER HAND LOST (.5 PERCENT) FROM 1972 AND MORE FROM 1976. THE PSI IN BOTH REGIONS DID FAR BETTER THAN IN 1976 AND IN CAMPANIA SLIGHTLY IMPROVED ON ITS 1972 PERFORMANCE WITH 16 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. OTHER LAY PARTIES DID WELL, WHILE THE MSI DROPPED 3 PERCENT IN PUGLIA AND 7 PERCENT IN CAMPANIA IN RESPECT TO AN OVERALL 11 PERCENT IN THE PREVIOUS LOCAL ELECTIONS.

5. A STRIKING ASPECT OF THE ELECTIONS IN THE SOUTH WAS THE FLUCTUATION OF VOTES IN LARGER TOWNS(REFTEL). IN PORTICI THE PCI VOTE ROSE FROM 23 PERCENT IN 1972 TO 42 PERCENT IN 1976, DROPPING BACK TO 24 PERCENT ON MAY 14. THE DC FLUCTUATED INVERSELY TAKING 42 PERCENT THIS YEAR AND RETAINING CITY HALL. DC GAINS OVER 1973 IN GIUGLIANO (UP 10 PERCENT) AND PCI LOSSES (DOWN 13 PERCENT) ALONG WITH SOLID SOCIALIST AND SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PERFORMANCES ARE LIKELY TO RESULT IN LEFTIST GIUNTA BEING REPLACED BY CENTER-LEFT ADMINISTRATION. IN THE TRADI-

TIONALLY LEFTIST CITY OF ANDRIA, PUGLIA, THE DC VOTE ROSE FROM 33 PERCENT TO 42 PERCENT WHILE THE PCI DROPPED FROM 37 PERCENT TO 36 PERCENT USING 1972 LOCAL ELECTIONS AS THE BASE. THE RETURN TO A CENTER-LEFT IS POSSIBLE THERE. THE PCI TOOK 48 PERCENT OF VOTE IN CROTONE, CALABRIA, IN JUNE 1976 BUT THIS TIME THE VOTE FELL TO 37.3 PERCENT (4 PERCENT LESS THAN LAST LOCAL ELECTIONS) WHILE THE

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DC MOVED FROM 24 TO 33 PERCENT BASED ON LAST LOCAL ELECTIONS. THE PSI WHICH HAS BEEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY DID NOT DO WELL. EVEN IN CROTONE A CENTER-LEFT GIUNTA MAY BE CONSIDERED.

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6. THE "DC FESTA" IN THE SOUTH IS SIGNIFICANT IN SPITE OF THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES CONTRIBUTING TO IT. THERE CAN BE MOMENTUM FOR PARTY RENEWAL AND INITIATIVE. A CAVEAT FOR THE DC AND LAY PARTIES IS THE MAY 14 INDICATION THAT VOTES IN THE SOUTH ARE NOW VOLATILE. A SWING PERCENTAGE BELONGS TO NO PARTY AND CAN EASILY SHIFT, ESPECIALLY IN RESPONSE TO DRAMATIC EVENTS. COLANTONIO.

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